

Fall from Forklift

In early 2010, a warehouse worker was killed when he fell while working atop a wooden pallet lifted by a company forklift. The employee was working as a team to prepare customer orders. While another employee operated the forklift, the employee stood atop a wooden pallet held by the forks and pulled items from the warehouse shelves. The accident occurred when the forklift was reversing while the employee was standing on the pallet. A horizontal ceiling beam struck the employee at upper chest level, causing him to fall off the pallet and onto the concrete floor approximately 15 feet below. The employee was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead approximately 32 hours later.

The investigation found the employer allowed the forklift operators to lift warehouse employees on the wooden pallets. Also contributing to the accident was the fact that the forklift operator failed to lower the forks prior to reversing. The operator at the time of the accident had received forklift training and held a current certification.

Citations were issued in the amount of \$1,500.

Recommendations:

1. Provide proper work platforms for the purpose of lifting personnel using forklifts.
2. Forbid the practice of lifting employees on anything except an approved, securely attached work platform.
3. Revise warehouse safety procedures and retrain forklift operators with an emphasis on the following:
 - * Lift personnel only on an approved, securely attached work platform.
 - * Lower forks before travelling.
 - * Be alert for overhead obstruction.
 - * Never raise or lower the lift while the forklift is travelling.
 - * Retraining on the forklift operator's manual and warning labels.
4. Employers must enforce warehouse safety procedures through periodic inspections and evaluations.

